

Listen

A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction

J A N U A R Y 2 0 1 4

V O L 8 : I S S U E 1

EMBRACING INNER WISDOM

The world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles, no matter how long, but only by a spiritual journey, a journey of one inch, very arduous and humbling and joyful, by which we arrive at the ground of our own feet, and learn to be at home. It is a journey we can make only by the acceptance of mystery and of mystification—by yielding to the condition that what we have expected is not there.” —Wendell Berry, *The Unforeseen Wilderness: Kentucky's Red River Gorge*



Mandarin Duck — *Aix galericulata*

On a Sunday afternoon, I hooked a bucket around my waist with a bungee cord, and wandered a hillside in search of highbush cranberries. Autumn arrived, bringing the pungent, boggy scent of pearl-sized berries growing in the woods below my home. I traversed the steep mossy landscape intent for a splash of ruby red cranberry, while simultaneously ruminating about a forthcoming talk for a women's retreat. My session, titled *Spaciousness of Soul*, evoked awareness that I was tangled in my inner mind and emotions, again. So, I gave permission for my inner orbit to untangle while I focused with delightful abandon on my cranberry hunt, exploring lichen growing on stumps, and navigating woods towering with spruce and birch trees. Shadow and light captivated me. My heart ached from a miscommunication with a friend, and daily life demands at work were getting the best of me,

again. One cranberry for the bucket, one for my mouth.

Surprise! I discovered a tree stump. A flat stump large enough to be a seat, maybe two feet wide, still rooted in the ground. I pulled away tall grasses, and sat myself down, astonished. *How had I never noticed this spot before?* I was high enough that my feet dangled, and so secluded it seemed I discovered a secret hideaway with a view, yet sheltered. A perfect spot to pause.

Breathing deeply I pondered my own inner constellation: how I consciously create spaciousness in my interior landscape through habits, devotions, and spiritual practice, and how I get knotted and tangled. I was still for quite a long time, then I glanced to my right, becoming astonished again! Next to me was a second stump, obscured by spent fireweed stalks, a partner to mine. Sun beamed through spruce trees high behind me. I turned looking up toward my sturdy log home,

realizing we each have so much hidden support. Mystery awaits us, evoking a place of creation and radiance already deep within. The ache in my heart melted. I recalled words from Richard Rohr, OFM, attached to my refrigerator with a magnet, “The universe is radical grace, therefore we do not need to be afraid.” In the picking and pausing during a highbush cranberry hunt, I discovered more about that inch of world beneath the ground of my own feet, my own spaciousness of being, grace.

Join me, please. Go on a hunt into the inner territory of your soul. Look closely at your inner constellation. Become untangled, create spaciousness in your life in order to be more open to receive and give your gifts and talents to the world. Perhaps meet with a spiritual companion to aid your journey. 🦉

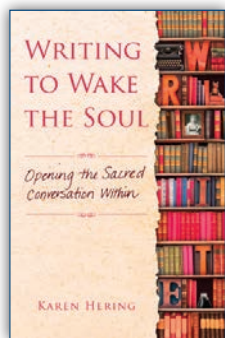
—Pegge Erkeneff

SEEDS OF INTEREST:

- 🦉 Book Review:
Writing to Wake the Soul
- 🦉 Global Resources
- 🦉 Field Guide:
Your Inner Constellation
- 🦉 Field Notes: Healing with
Asian Art and *Gogyoshi*
- 🦉 Poem: *The Chaplain*
- 🦉 Ask Owl



BOOK REVIEW



**Writing to Wake the Soul:
Opening the Sacred Conversation Within
by Karen Hering**

Hillsboro, Oregon: Beyond Words
304 pages, CAD\$27.99, GBPE16.99, USD\$18.00
Reviewed by Kathleen D. Clark

Author Karen Hering, who describes herself as a literary minister, writes this in her introduction: “This book and the spiritual practice of writing it describes, is about reclaiming our vocabularies of faith and restoring our capacity for metaphorical thinking. It explores how we might wake what Hebrew scripture calls the “still, small voice within” by engaging in contemplative correspondence with our inner self, soul, and wisdom. In the pages that follow, you’ll find poetry and story, myth and meditation, etymologies and images, history and hard science—as well as a plenitude of questions, many of them ultimately unanswerable but all of them richly ponderable.

In the sixty reflections and writing prompts provided in Part Two, you’ll find an invitation to add your own

stories, words, and images to the conversation. The larger story of the universe is still being written, and each of us has a part to play in how that story ultimately turns out” (xix). The first part of the book presents an introduction to the approach to writing as a spiritual practice, *correspondence*, while the rest of the book explores ten themes, such as prayer, justice, sin, and grace. Hering shows her depth of experience in leading individuals and groups through the many practical tips for engaging the book. For writing groups she provides structure for writers and leaders alike. I can easily imagine making use of this book to lead a class, being guided by it in a peer-led small group, or using it for my own reflective writing. A spiritual director might make use of some of the prompts to invite a spiritual directee into contemplation of the *still small voice* during a spiritual direction conversation. Finally, the author is a Unitarian Universalist pastor, and I appreciate her care to ensure that this book could be used by men or women in a variety of spiritual or faith traditions. 🌿

—Kathleen D. Clark, PhD, received the Diploma in the Art of Spiritual Direction from the San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, California, USA. She is a spiritual director and associate professor of communication at the University of Akron, Akron, Ohio, USA. She may be reached at kclark@uakron.edu.

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FIELD GUIDE

YOUR INNER CONSTELLATION

"Everything gives off light at all times," said evolutionary cosmologist, Brian Swimme. If this is true, and it likely is, do you have methods to authentically recognize your inner constellation in order to guide and bring focus to your human landscape and soulscape? Knowing your core identity, what brings you most alive matters—not only for your own well-being, but also for people whom you break bread with, and potentially serve and heal with your presence.

REFLECT

Get comfortable. No interruptions for thirty minutes or more. Have paper and pen, markers, or paints nearby. Breathe into your here and now—whatever it contains.

READ AND PONDER

You already have what you need, really. Everything is contained, imbued in essence, in your original blessing. The daily rhythm of living is like a train timetable: a schedule, arrivals and departures, making tracks, going through tunnels and open stretches. Yet, the inner life—our soulscape—is not like this at all. We experience delays, but our inner constellation, which travels with us at all times is dependent upon our inner atmosphere, orbit. Our inner state of being may be contracted, dispassionate, or expansive.

REVEAL

Sacred space dwells within me. I bring my inner constellation with me at all times. What is my inner orbit? What am I present to? What do I desire more of in my life?

Journal, draw, or convey your inner constellation. Be willing to be challenged or surprised.

Give thanks with your own expression.

Amen. 



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W W W . S D I W O R L D . O R G

Listen is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at **www.sdiworld.org**, you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions,

and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 5,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at **www.sdiworld.org**. 





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FIELD NOTES

HEALING WITH ASIAN ART AND GOGYOSHI

My friend Tracy, a spiritual director, is currently undergoing treatment for cancer. She initiated an idea of "Healing with Asian Art and *Gogyoshi*" among a few friends. Tracy explained, "The main purpose is for healing the inner spirit." *Gogyoshi* is a Japanese, modern, style-free form, unstructured, five-line poetry. It has no capitals, commas nor full stops, although ellipses (...) are permitted. These batik paintings poems are my gifts. I dedicate these to *healing of the inner spirit*.

– Nita Ng [Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia]



Sophia - Wisdom

A voice of wisdom
Surrounds me
Permeates me
Wait...Listen...
She speaks from within



Love is

Love is
Beyond words
Beyond images
Beyond energy...
Yet Love is all those as well.

Be still and listen...



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The Chaplain

Am I on the right track? –
I thought...
After all, listening is all I did
He went ahead with lisping sound
And talked and cried
And talk some more.

He told me of growing up
It was hard and he did not count
He learned not to feel
'cause feeling hurt so much.

Korean War and nightmares
Other things and nightmares
He is now in therapy
Learning to lisp "I love you".

And he brought roses to his wife
And said "I love you"
For the very first time
And she is strong and never cries.

Now he is learning
How to cry, lisp and all
How to feel, and
How to pray, lisp and all.

So, he prayed thanking God
For the day, the hurting back,
For the sharing and the visit
lisp and all.

And, I felt awkward...
Not for his crying
Not for his early hard
No-counting life.

Not even for Korea
And nightmares
And love and roses given to a
Strong, not-crying wife.

I felt awkward...
Because...
All I did was
Say Hallo, and sit down
And listen, pray
get up
and say good bye.

— Ilse Wefers, OSB Oblate, DMin [Washington, USA]



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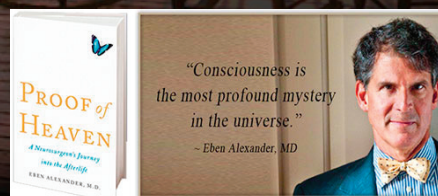
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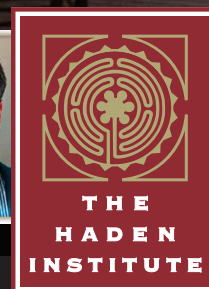
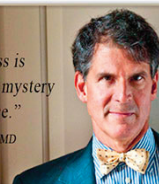
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ASK OWL



Question: My spiritual companion makes all the difference in my life each month. We've been meeting together for several years. Recently, a friend told me her spiritual

director has begun to use art and a creative process with the men and women whom she companions, and she is working through a book of creative exercises in her contemplative practice. I would like to do something like this—but usually my spiritual direction time is spent with prayer and conversation. Sometimes I share my journaling and writing. I am very interested in aspects of myself that I've not yet delved into. Can you offer me any assistance how to ask my spiritual director to perhaps get creative with me?

Hoot Hoot: Thank you for your yearning and question! Indeed, spiritual guides do incorporate multiple ways to deeply listen with you to the movements of Spirit and emerging wisdom in our lives. Art and creative expression can be a significant door to open our heart and soul to spaciousness and healing.

Creativity is another avenue to experience the movements of love and transformation.

Be open—talk to your spiritual guide about your desire. If you find a book or resource you like, engage and play with it, then share your experience during spiritual direction the same way you would with perhaps a poem, dream, or journal entry. Consider asking your spiritual guide about his or her own experience with creativity as a way to explore spirituality.

Many excellent resources, written by spiritual directors, have been published in books and blogs, or shared on retreats and in small groups. Certainly you can explore multiple methods to deepen your own inner spiritual growth and journey, often becoming surprised when risking and sharing your vulnerability and creativity.

Most importantly, be willing to go on a journey of discovery with your spiritual guide. Be honest in your quest for the wisdom and insight that may emerge in the intersection of prayer, contemplative life, and creativity. 🦉

—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail Listen@sdiworld.org.

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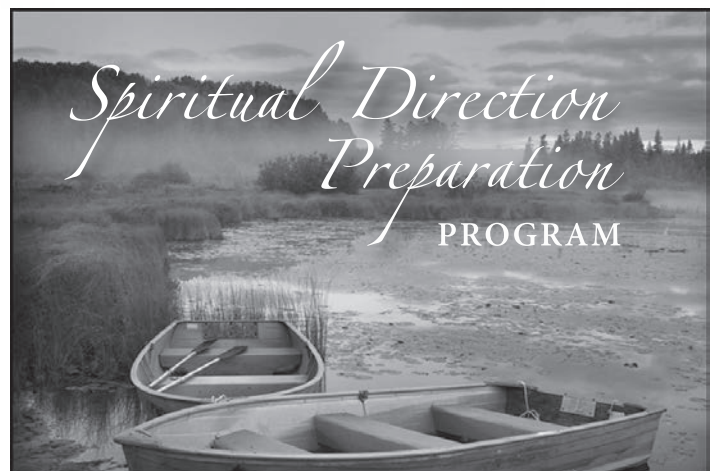
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Al servicio de lo sacro alrededor del mundo y a través de las tradiciones ...”

—Translated by Marta Rios and Xavier Ortiz Monasterio

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